

Camp Richardson Resort, Cord Cabin,  
Highway 89, approximately three miles  
west of the intersection of State  
Highways 50 and 89  
South Lake Tahoe Vicinity  
El Dorado County  
California

**HABS No.** CA-2657-A

HABS  
CAL  
9-LKTAS.V,  
1A-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
CAMP RICHARDSON RESORT, CORD CABIN

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HABS No. CA-2657-A

Location:

The Cord cabin is one of two guest cabins remaining on the right (east) of the main drive way entering Camp Richardson Resort. These two are isolated from the other historic cabins located west of this drive. In addition, the Cord faces the main thoroughfare and is just right (east) of the kiosk controlling entry. Camp Richardson resort is about three miles west of the intersection of state highways 50 and 89.

South Lake Tahoe Vicinity

El Dorado County

California

USGS South Lake Tahoe Quadrangle (7.5'), Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.756680.4313520

Present Owner:

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit  
870 Emerald Bay Road Suite #1  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Present Use:

vacant; to be demolished 5/1/96

Significance:

The Cord Cabin is one of 32 historic guest cabins contributing to the Camp Richardson Resort Historic District, representing the period of significance for the resort (1926-1940). The Cord cabin is an example of "resort rustic" architecture typical of resorts associated with the outdoor recreational movement in the Sierra Nevada, automobile travel and the expansion of the State Highway system. Camp Richardson Resort was established around 1919 by Alonzo Richardson although most of the extant buildings were constructed between 1926 and 1960. A number of the first buildings were purchased from the old Grove Resort, and moved to Camp Richardson. All the guest cabins were named after popular automobiles or oil and gas companies since, beginning in 1911, Richardson owned and operated the first auto stage line between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The Cord Cabin was one of the later wood-frame rustic cabins built at Camp Richardson. Historic documents and informants place its construction around 1931. Unlike the earlier cabins, which appear to have been either moved from another site or built from discarded buildings, the Cord Cabin appears to have been a design created by Alonzo Richardson and executed in the early 1930s after the Cord Automobile was introduced to the American market.
2. Architect: Alonzo Richardson.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Alonzo Richardson purchased the property which was to become Camp Richardson in 1923 from Comstock and Lawrence, who had used the land as far back as the 1870s for logging. An additional parcel along the lakeshore was purchased from Copeland's Grove Resort. In 1953 Alonzo Richardson died and the resort continued to operate under the management of his wife Cora and his son-in-law Ray Knisely. In 1965 ownership of the resort was transferred to the United States Government, to be administered by the United States Forest Service. A life estate was given to Cora Richardson for their house at the resort. Since 1966, the Forest Service has leased the resort as a concession to various permittees.
4. Builder, contractor, supplier: Alonzo Richardson and others.
5. Original plans and construction: None in existence.
6. Alterations and additions: There are no known major structural alterations and additions to the Cord Cabin with the exception of a modern 5' x 5' shed addition in the rear, which houses a water heater.

**B. Historical Context**

The Cord Cabin as a part of the Camp Richardson Resort has its roots in the beginnings of the outdoor recreation movement in California and the transition from wealthy privately-owned resorts at Lake Tahoe to public, middle-class, auto-oriented resorts at the lake.

In 1904 Joseph Parmeter purchased a 100 x 400 foot parcel of land at the terminus of Gardner's railroad. Under the management of John Copeland and his wife Nellie, Parmeter's daughter, this became a summer camp called the Grove. The Copelands rebuilt the lumber camp pier, put up summer cabins and tents, and built a dance pavillion and saloon over the water. The finished establishment was called Copeland's Grove Hotel. It later became Ziegler's Grove under new management. Access to the resort was via a 50 foot right-of-way which ran through property owned by Harry O. Comstock and Melville Lawrence, agents for "Lucky" Baldwin. None of the earlier improvements related to Gardner, Parmeter, or Copeland exist today.

In 1923, Alonzo Leroy Richardson purchased the Comstock and Lawrence lands, which he had leased since 1921. He also acquired the Grove holdings. Richardson had been in charge of the grounds and stage delivery for the Tahoe Tavern. In 1909 Richardson, along with others, started the Placerville-Tallac auto stage which served the south end of Tahoe. Richardson proceeded to build the first rental cabins for his camp and to add a pier 100 feet west of Copeland's pier. In 1927, he acquired the post office from Baldwin's Tallac Hotel, then being demolished. The acquisitions allowed Richardson to offer regular mail, express, and freight steamer services.

In the late 1920s he continued to add cabins to the site, naming them after the vehicles he had owned or was familiar with over the years: Hall Scott, Cord, Pierce Arrow, Cadillac, Buick, Oldsmobile, Peerless, Hudson, etc.

During the early 1930s Richardson expanded the resort by constructing a lodge, dining facility, general merchandise store, service station and other commercial buildings along present-day Highway 89, then State Route 37. The resort was promoted as being along the Lincoln Transcontinental Highway. A route map included in the Camp Richardson brochure of the 1930s, depicted a resort accessed by all major metropolitan areas from San Diego to Red Bluff. Richardson's plans called for an "all purpose" type resort, one which could accomodate all classes of tourists. For those individuals or families wishing a permanent summer cottage, Richardson offered lots for sale in his "subdivision" outside the property.

During the 1930s Richardson desired to create a family oriented resort to meet a variety of recreation needs. Guests were often greeted by the owner, as the brochure explained "Ask for Rich when you arrive". Along with a post office the resort offered a store equipped with "groceries, fresh meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh milk, delicatessen and bakery goods, a soda fountain, soft drinks, beer, wine, sandwiches, liquor and coffee". Those wishing a shave or haircut could get one at the resort's own barber shop and beauty parlor. For guests with cameras, a twenty-four hour developing service was offered, and for visitors needing a lube or oil change, a full service garage was located at the resort.

Camp Richardson, besides the lakeshore beach, offered guests a seven piece orchestra for those warm summer night dances. For the sportsman or sportswoman, the resort provided hiking trails, horseback riding, tennis, croquet, putting green, aquaplaning, badminton, archery, row boats, fishing, and softball. Guides were available for those individuals wishing to access remote high Sierra lakes and streams.

The least expensive accomodations at Camp Richardson were offered with its campground, which cost just fifty cents per day or \$3 per week. The campgrounds were equipped with running water and toilet facilities. The resort which generally opened around the first of May and closed around the fifteenth of November offered

rooms under the European Plan, which did not include meals. Rates for the hotel ranged from \$2.50 to \$4.50 per day depending on whether the room was a single or double and provided with a bath in the room. Sleeping tents were \$2 per day. Breakfast luncheon was 75 cents, dinner \$1, and Sunday lunch and dinner \$1.25. Housekeeping cabins and tents were the most expensive accommodations at the resort and varied from \$4 to \$8 per day depending on their size and bathroom facilities.

For example the small cabin consisted of a living room with a double bed, kitchen with gas stove, toilet, and cold running water, while the extra large cabin consisted of a living room with a double Chesterfield, two bed rooms with double beds, a kitchen with gas or electric stove, and a shower with a toilet and hot water heater.

By the mid-1930s Alonzo Richardson had succeeded in developing one of the most popular family tourist camps in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Richardson's strategy for his success was built around the premise that a successful tourist camp depended on a good, efficient transportation system. Richardson himself, realized the need for an adequate transportation route between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe, and organized an auto stage line under the name "Star Auto Stage Association", referred to locally as the "Pierce Arrow Stage Company". During the teens Richardson arranged with the Antioch and Eastern Railway to provide discounts to passengers enroute to Lake Tahoe. Richardson also had some form of agreement with the Southern Pacific Railroad for discounts on passenger service.

After 1911 the State Railroad Commission regulated the licensing of public auto stage companies in California. For at least eight years, Richardson was the principal operator of auto stages between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe, although other companies tried to compete, most were unsuccessful.

Like other resorts around Lake Tahoe, fire was always a danger, since at many of the resorts firewood provided the sole source of heat. Camp Richardson escaped any serious fires until 1938 when a fire damaged the restaurant, which today serves as a general store. Following the fire, the main restaurant was enlarged with the addition of a wing and second floor. The Richardsons took advantage of the labor on site building the damaged store, and constructed their new home. The house located just south of the store was modest when compared to the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century homes built by wealthy Bay Area capitalists along the lakeshore, but the two story home accommodated the needs of the family, and was one of the larger homes being built at the lake during the Depression. Another disaster occurred in 1983 when heavy snows resulted in the collapse of the general store, which was situated between the current lodge and the restaurant (new general store). The building was a total loss and was not rebuilt.

The post-War era of the late 1940s was a transition point for many mountain resorts around the shores of Lake Tahoe. During the 1940s and early 1950s individual automobile ownership grew rapidly, and the need for privately owned auto-stages became less important. Improvements in transportation, such as the opening of Highway 50 over Echo Summit year round, helped influence resorts to provide accommodations year round. Camp Richardson still maintained the family atmosphere it had developed in the 1930s offering many of the same recreation opportunities. By the late 1940s the resort could now be accessed by bus or airplane.

By the early 1950s the name was changed from "Camp Richardson" to "Richardson's Resort" to reflect the trend towards a modern resort. The new tourists generally stayed for shorter periods of time and demanded more modern facilities. To accomplish this, the owners of the resort constructed "modern brick cabins" and "motel rooms". The new accommodations offered kitchen-dinettes and showers. The new modern brick cabins rented for \$175 per week, while the lodge or hotel rooms were half the price. Trailer hookups were now offered along with the camp sites.

In 1953 Alonzo Richardson died, but the camp continued to operate under the management of his wife Cora. Ray Knisely, his son-in-law, was appointed trustee of the property. In 1964 ownership was transferred to the federal government under the administration of the United States Forest Service. A life estate was given to Cora Richardson for the old Richardson House at the resort. The life estate ended several years ago at the

death of Mrs. Richardson. Since 1966, the Forest Service has leased the camp as a concession--the first lessee was Charles Orwick.

The history of Camp Richardson spanned seven decades beginning in the early 1920s. The tourist camp began as an auto-oriented camp, taking advantage of an improved state highway road system and Alonzo Richardson's monopoly on his Pierce Arrow Auto Stage line between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe. The first buildings erected at the resort reflect the camp's close association with the "age of automobiles" and the desire of the owners to provide guests a comfortable yet rustic setting for recreation.

From most accounts Camp Richardson, later Richardson's Resort, was a fairly successful operation compared to other similar resorts around the lakeshore. The resort weathered the Great Depression of the 1930s and tumultuous years of the 1940s, and today has again become one of the area's most popular vacation spots.



PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## A. General Statement

1. **Architectural character:** The Cord Cabin is commonly referred to as a "resort rustic" style of architecture, common to Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. Resort rustic architecture is characterized by simple gable designs finished with natural products such as wood shingles, log, bark, and board and batten. Colors, which are normally earth tones, blend with the natural environment.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Both the exterior and interior of the cabin are in very poor condition, suffering from dry-rot, a deteriorated post and pier foundation, and a partially collapsed roof and porch.

## B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The building's floor plan is a rectangle that measures 22' x 26', which includes the covered front porch. In the rear is a small modern shed addition which houses the water heater.
2. **Foundation:** Wooden post and pier. Some of the posts are supported by local rock. One incorporates a Washoe Indian milling slab.
3. **Walls:** The exterior walls are clad with wood shingles and 1" x 12" boards and battens.
4. **Structural systems, framing:** The wood-frame building is characterized by standard stick style single-wall construction.
  - a. **Floor:** The floor is pine or fir tongue and groove, covered with carpet and linoleum.
  - b. **Walls:** The walls are full dimension 2" x 4" studs at 24" on center, minus fireblocks, and clad in the interior with celotex panels, sometimes referred to as beaverboard.
  - c. **Roof:** The roof system is a simple gable with an extended roof shed porch. Extended open 2" x 6" rafters are held up by a peeled pole truss and supporting columns.
  - d. **Dormers:** None.
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** Full front extended porch clad with shingles and held up by peeled pole columns of pine or fir.

6. Chimneys: None.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two wood exterior entry doors characterized by a fixed pane of glass over three panels.

b. Windows and shutters: There are four 6 over 1 divided light wood sash casement windows and two wood sash fixed light windows. The windows emulate Craftsman designs of the 1920s and 1930s.

8. Roof: The roof shape is a simple gable.

a. Shape, covering: Wood shingles and rolled roofing with multiple layers of shingles applied as needed to cover, rather than replace old deteriorated material.

b. Cornice, eaves: Extended rafters.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plan: Open, divided three rooms consisting of two bedrooms including a kitchen/dining area and one bathroom with a sink, toilet, and shower.

2. Stairways: None.

3. Flooring: Carpet and linoleum over pine or fir tongue and groove.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Celotex panel walls.

5. Door and window openings: Finished in 1" x 4" battens.

6. Decorative features and trim: Wood battens were used to break up and divide the celotex panels on the walls and ceiling.

7. Hardware: Door and window hardware is original to the building. The hardware is typical post 1920 design characterized by simple plate brass knobs and plates.

8. **Mechanical Equipment:** Since the cabin was used exclusively for summer use, no heating or air condition systems are present in the cabin.

- a. Heating, ventilating, air conditioning: None.
- b. Lighting: Ceiling light no shades.
- c. Plumbing: Toilet, sink, and later shower addition.

9. **Original Furnishings:** None existing.

D. **Site:**

1. **General Setting:** Camp Richardson Historic Resort is bounded on the north by 1950s improvements adjacent to Lake Tahoe, extending south of state highway 89 to resort-managed developed camp grounds. It is adjacent to the Pope, Baldwin, and Keller estates, known as the Tallac National Register Historic District to the west. The Camp Richardson District is bordered on the east by resort camping grounds and a private, undeveloped property. The setting maintains a rustic and natural feel relative to the urbanization of South Lake Tahoe as a whole, but incorporates multiple developed recreation opportunities including bicycle rentals, roller blading, ice cream, a laundromat, RV camping, and a convenience store. It is a crowded, congested and colorful carnival atmosphere during the summer in sharp contrast to the elite privilege imparted by the Tallac site.
2. **Historic landscape design:** The historic landscape of Camp Richardson has been modified over the years, but incorporates "old growth" pines. At one time there were extensive irrigated lawns throughout the resort. The entrance road has also been realigned following the loss of the old store. In general, the resort was designed in such a way to accommodate automobiles.
3. **Outbuildings:** 53 additional buildings and structures.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. **Architectural Drawings:** see attached.
- B. **Historic views:** None.
- C. **Interviews:** Ray Knisely, 1989. Dana E. Supernowicz, Carson City, Nevada.

D.

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E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Interviews with past owners of the resort.

F. Supplemental material: None

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was prepared to mitigate the effects resulting from the demolition of the Cord Cabin, built in approximately 1937 at Camp Richardson Resort. It was determined by the Forest Service and (SHPO) that the above-mentioned action constituted an adverse effect to the historic property. Because of that effect, the Forest Service, State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO), and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). One of the stipulations was to conduct a HABS report prior to demolition of the building.

Prepared By: Dana E. Supernowicz

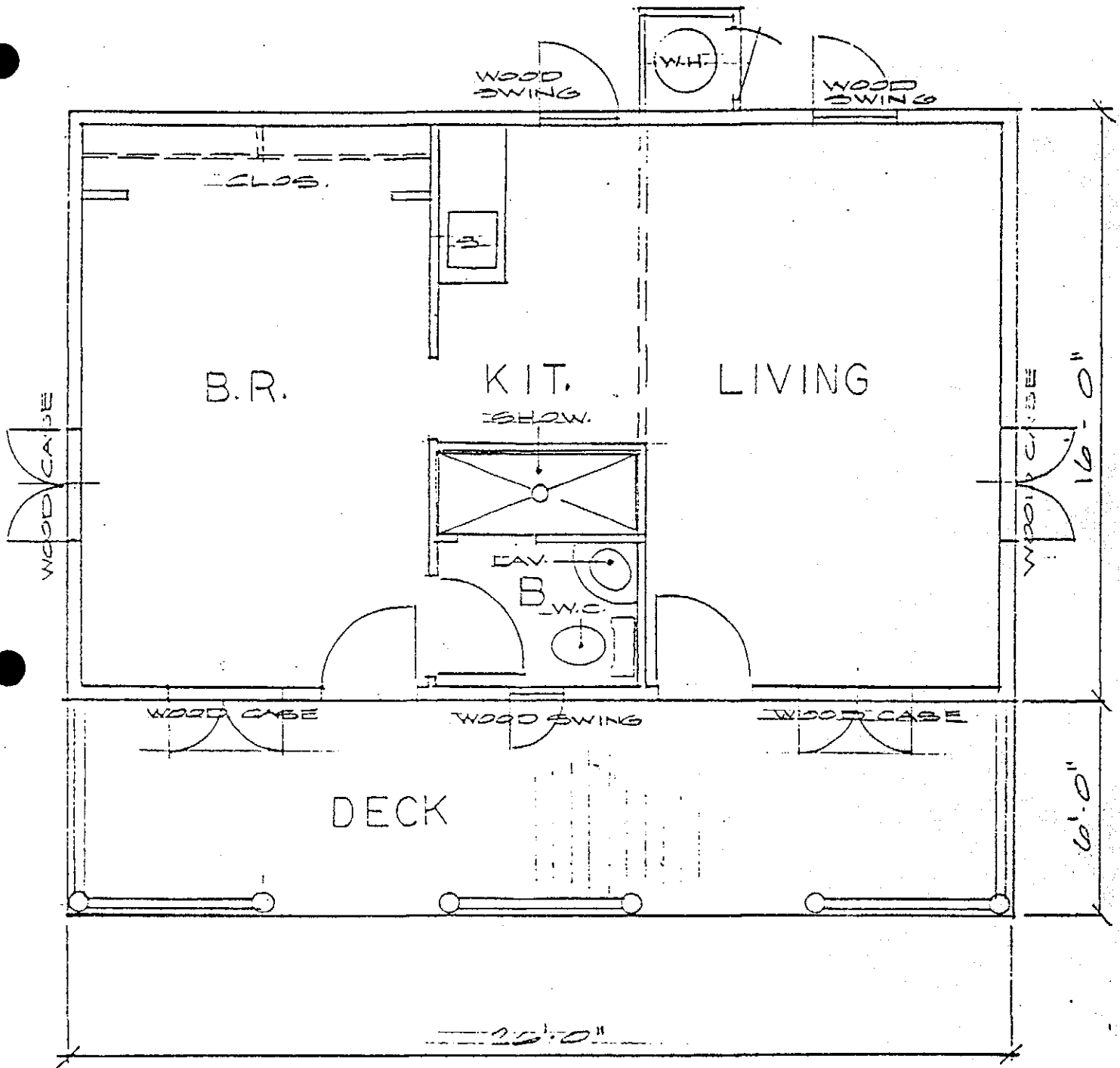
Title: Zone Historian, R5

Affiliation: Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

Date: January 22, 1994

With Assistance From: Penny Rucks, Heritage Program Manager,  
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.





CABIN "CORD"

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

CAMP RICHARDSON RESORT

S. LAKE TAHOE, CA.

SHT. 1 OF 1

5/14/59

